

Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCEC) Overview

Cecilia Woodworth, Assistant Director, State Programs, DHCD
Stefanie Coxe, Executive Director, Regional Housing Network (RHN)



Welcome



- Welcome & Housekeeping
- Introduction
- HCEC Agencies
- What Do HCECs Do
- Contacting Local HCEC
- Service and Referral Areas
- Additional Services Under EDI
- Questions & Answers



HCEC

Housing Consumer Education Centers

of Massachusetts

www.masshousinginfo.org | 800-224-5124



HCEC Agencies



- Berkshire Housing Development Corporation
- Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI)
- Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHA)
- Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC)
- Way Finders
- Metro Housing | Boston
- RCAP Solutions, Inc.
- South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC)
- NeighborWorks Housing Solutions (NHS)



What Do HCECs Do?



- Serve as the “Housing Emergency Rooms” and one-stop shop for all things housing
- Offer answers to a wide range of questions about all types of housing problems designed to maximize housing stability, strengthen investments, and minimize disputes
- Serve as the framework for connection to other programs, such as RAFT/ERMA; voucher programs; and others
- Help people understand the complex and confusing network of affordable housing programs
- Educate people about their rights and responsibilities, including how to be a good tenant or landlord
- Connect them with “specialists” such as legal aid



Who Do HCECs Serve?



- Families experiencing homelessness
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Tenants
- Landlords
- Prospective home buyers
- Homeowners



Contacting the Local HCEC



Find the Housing Consumer Education Center Nearest You

In light of the public health emergency, please be sure to call or check the agency website to find the best way to contact each agency. Click on the map or the list or submit your city/town/village to visit an agency web site, or call 1-800-224-5124 to find the agency that serves your area.

Choose One

FIND AGENCY



www.masshousinginfo.org | 800-224-5124



Contacting the Local HCEC



■ Call or email is best

- Walk-in hours are available during “normal” times (and some even now)
- All are answering the phone during business hours
- Will return voicemails if someone does not answer the phone
- Make sure phone number given can accept calls and voicemails (if possible)

■ Most information is shared electronically, but can work with households that do not have access to the internet or phone

■ All can work with clients who have limited English proficiency



HCEC Intake and Assessment



- HCEC staff will listen, ask questions, and then provide appropriate services or referrals
- HCECs are closely linked to RAFT staff
 - Clients may be processed through HCEC before being referred to RAFT
 - Most consumers have more than one need. Intake through HCECs first helps to better support the household
- HCECs also have workshops and other resources that can be accessed without a referral



Referrals and Services



- RAAs vary in services offered internally at their agencies
- If an HCEC does not offer a service in house, they will refer a client outside of the agency
- HCECs have strong relationships with service providers in their area
 - Clients may need to follow up on referrals independently



Financial Assistance and Benefits



- RAFT, ERMA, and similar local programs
- Financial literacy resources
- Fuel assistance and working utility companies
- SNAP benefits, WIC, and food pantry referrals
- Childcare, including subsidized childcare
- HomeBASE and similar programs



Housing Search



- Shelter resources for individuals and families experiencing homelessness
- Housing search for those who have a voucher and need help finding an apartment
- Affordable housing search
 - Help applying for various housing subsidies
 - Help applying to affordable housing opportunities
- Helping property owners list their unit



Tenant/Landlord Issues



- Basic information on landlord/tenant law
- Information on how to be a good tenant and/or landlord
- Light mediation
- Fair housing information and referrals to MCAD
- Referrals to legal services, including expanded programming under EDI
- Referrals to community mediation, including expanded programming under EDI



Additional Referral Areas



- Domestic violence information
- ESL
- Workforce development/job training
- Health care referrals, including mental health
- Substance abuse referrals
- Home buyer education for low-income and/or first-time homebuyers
- Referrals to TPP, including expanded programming under EDI



Expansion Under EDI



- \$3.75M budget in FY20; \$6.5M budget in FY21
 - New spending almost exclusively on new staff and supporting new staff
- \$1.25M of expansion for “service coordinators” or “light case managers”
 - Enhanced service provision that includes navigating and connecting to the various assistance options and coordination
 - HCEC staff will follow up on whether client needs further assistance connecting to resources
 - Expanded services also available at under Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance (CMHA) and Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development (LHAND)



QUESTIONS?

www.masshousinginfo.org

<http://www.mahousinghelp.com>